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ERASMUS HALL HIGH SCHOOL

BILINGUAL PROGRAM

1985-1986

OEA Evaluation Report

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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O.E.A. Evaluation Section Report

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Grant Number: G00-830-2648

ERASMUS HALL HIGH SCHOOL

BILINGUAL PROGRAM

1985-1986

Principal:
Stanley Saretsky

Project Director:
Thomas Lenihan

Prepared by the
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A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This program, in its final year of a three-year funding cycle, served 212 students of limited English proficiency (LEP). The program population included 191 Haitian students, in addition to 14 Hispanic, six Asian, and one Middle Eastern student. All program participants received English as a second language (E.S.L.) instruction. Native language arts instruction was available for the Haitian and Hispanic students, and bilingual classes in mathematics, science, social studies, and typing were available in Haitian Creole/French.

The major instructional goal was to provide students with special assistance in English as a means to accelerate their movement into mainstream academic classes. At the same time, bilingual content-area instruction was provided for Haitian students so that they could progress in those areas, gain skills lacking in their own academic development, and expand their native language skills. The program also provided a source of identity for students while they made the difficult adjustment to life in the United States.

A combination of Title VII and tax-levy funds supported administrative staff, instructional services, and paraprofessional assistance. Development activities for staff members included meetings, in-house workshops, and attendance at university courses. Supportive services to program participants consisted of academic, personal, career, and college counseling. Tutoring was provided during lunch periods, after school, and on a pull-out basis during class time in Chinese, French, and Haitian Creole.

Program objectives were assessed in English language development (Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test [CREST]), and attendance (school and program records). Objectives for Haitian students were also assessed in native language development (Le Test de Lecture). Quantitative analysis of student achievement data indicates that:

-- Students failed to achieve the proposed criterion of mastering five CREST objectives per month of instruction.

-- Haitian program students made significant posttest gains on Le Test de Lecture, thus meeting the program objective.

-- The attendance rate of program students was significantly higher than the schoolwide rate, thus meeting the program objective.

The following recommendations are aimed at improving the overall effectiveness of the program:

-- If funding permits, identifying additional grade advisors (particularly for the Spanish-speaking students) not only to satisfy the existing needs of Hispanic students, but also to alleviate the current Haitian grade advisor's caseload;

-- Actively formalizing collaboration with parents of project students;

-- Providing achievement data for all students and revising the program's E.S.L. objectives to reflect a more realistic achievement level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this report, as of all Office of Educational Assessment/Bilingual Education Evaluation Unit reports, is the result of a cooperative effort of regular staff and consultants. In addition to those whose names appear on the cover, Eulalia Cabrera has interpreted findings and has integrated material into reports. Arthur Lopatin has edited the reports following the O.E.A. style guide and has written report summaries. Finally, Joseph Rivera, Marcia Gilbert, Bruce Roach, Gladys Rosa, and Martin Zurla have worked intensively as word processors to produce and correct reports. Without their able and faithful participation, the unit could not have handled such a large volume of work and still produced quality evaluation reports.

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ERASMUS HALL HIGH SCHOOL
BILINGUAL PROGRAM

Location:	911 Flatbush Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11226
Year of Operation:	1985-86, final year of a three-year funding cycle
Target Languages:	Haitian Creole, Spanish, and Chinese
Number of Students:	212
Principal:	Stanley Saretsky
Project Director:	Thomas Lenihan

I. INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus Hall High School building is a large, impressive facility that dominates one side of a busy commercial street in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn. The original colonial school building in the inner courtyard and the Dutch Reformed Church across the street reflect the early history of this area of New York City. The school is proud of the role it has played in the growth and development of American education since the early days of the republic, a pride that is evident in the first pages of the Erasmus Hall High School Student Guide, which present a chronology of school events dating back to 1786.

Today, the building itself shows the same signs of urban decay that are evident in the surrounding neighborhood. The corridors are dimly lit and spare, with paint peeling from the walls. Although the classrooms are cleaner and brighter, the standard equipment in many of the rooms still consists of nineteenth-century style desks with ink wells, strung together on wood runners. A few seats are missing, occasionally forcing students to double up in overcrowded classes.

In the 1985-86 academic year, Erasmus Hall High School had approximately 3,500 students enrolled in grades nine through twelve. The school's racial/ethnic breakdown was 73 percent Black American, 20 percent Haitian, six percent Hispanic, and one percent Asian. Most of the school's students were residents of the Flatbush area which surrounds the school. The overwhelming majority of them were members of low-income families, as indicated by the 90 percent eligibility rate for free lunch. Only 15 percent of the school's students were at or above grade level in reading and in mathematics.

As was reported in last year's report, the old home economics dining/living room has been refurbished for the school's hotel and restaurant management course, and two rooms of Erasmus's colonial-era academy building have been refurbished for use as a school museum, where students of travel and tourism serve as tour guides. Both courses enroll large numbers of bilingual program students.

This report, based on a review of program records, classroom observations, and interviews with the project director, teachers, other staff members, and students, describes the bilingual program's services during its third year and makes recommendations for future improvements.

II. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Of the bilingual program's enrollment of 212 students, Haitians, most of them Creole speakers, constituted 90 percent; Hispanics composed seven percent; and three percent were Chinese, Vietnamese, or Khmer speakers. (See Table 1.)

Several years ago, Haitian immigrants were upper-middle class professionals whose children had attended French-speaking schools in Haiti. Those students enrolled in Erasmus Hall with an academic preparation suitable to their grade level in the U.S. and, possibly, with some knowledge of English. Many of those students, who have been in the U.S. for as long as five years, now think of themselves as Americans and have entered the linguistic and cultural mainstream.

On the other hand, more recently arrived Haitian students reportedly come into American public schools with less academic preparation and more problematic family situations than their predecessors. They are less likely to have attended school; if they have, their attendance may have been sporadic. Consequently, they have not learned to speak, read, or write French, and it is unlikely that they are literate in Creole since the language has only recently been transcribed. Some may be living with relatives or foster parents, pressured by economic necessity to take after-school jobs, suffering emotional and cultural disorientation.

Faculty and staff were aware of the changes taking place in the student profile and were attempting to simplify course content, introduce literacy skills into native language arts classes, and provide more support services. At least one Haitian staff member expressed concern about the self-image and cultural identity of his students.

TABLE 1

Number and Percent of Program
Students by Language and Country of Birth

Language	Country of Birth	Number	Percent
Haitian Creole	Haiti	191	90
Spanish	Central and South America	13	6
	Puerto Rico	1	*
Vietnamese	Vietnam	2	1
Khmer	Cambodia	1	*
	India	1	*
Cantonese	People's Republic of China	1	*
	Hong Kong	1	*
Arabic	Other Middle Eastern	1	*
TOTAL		212	100

*Less than one percent.

- The majority (90 percent) of the program students were Haitian-born and were native speakers of Haitian Creole.
- About seven percent of the program students were reported to be native Spanish speakers.

On the positive side, bilingual program students reportedly exhibited an unparalleled enthusiasm for school. Their attendance rate was excellent, making class size a more critical factor in the bilingual program because so many students showed up regularly. Drop-out rates were also lower for program students than for non-program students despite the fact that 75 percent of the program students were overage for their grade level (see Table 2), and overage students are more prone to leave school before graduation.

Of the students served in the 1985-86 academic year, 54 percent were female. Most students were in the tenth grade (102 or 51 percent). Only nine twelfth graders were reported. By June 1986, 47 students (22 percent) had been in the program for two years; 101 students (48 percent) had been in the program for one year or less.

TABLE 2

Number of Program Students by Age and Grade

Age	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
14	3	0	0	0	3
15	10	6	1	0	17
16	9	17	6	0	32
17	11	26	10	0	47
18	3	28	10	0	41
19	1	17	8	3	29
20	2	6	18	0	26
21	0	2	5	4	11
22	0	0	2	1	3
22	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	39	102	60	9	210*
Overage Students					
Number	26	79	43	9	157
Percent	67	77	72	100	75

*Data were missing for two students.

Note. Shaded boxes indicate expected age range for grade.

- Seventy-five percent of the program students were overage for their grade.

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PHILOSOPHY

Erasmus Hall's bilingual program espoused a transitional philosophy of bilingual education. Haitian students were placed in English as a second language (E.S.L.), native language arts (N.L.A.), and bilingual classes according to their language proficiency and academic level, but all were expected to gradually increase their use of English and decrease their reliance on their native language. The recently formalized language policy clarified this transitional philosophy by specifying acceptable patterns of language use in bilingual courses. Since bilingual classes were offered only in Haitian Creole, students of limited English proficiency (LEP) who spoke other languages received E.S.L. instruction and paraprofessional assistance in their native language. Spanish-speaking students also attended N.L.A. classes.

As proposed, the program provided both instructional and non-instructional services. Instructional services consisted of E.S.L., native language arts, content-area subjects, and computer literacy. Non-instructional services included career guidance, staff development, and parental involvement.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The program continued to function much as it did during its second year of operation. The project director, who is the assistant principal (A.P.) of foreign languages, was responsible for the supervision and administration of all aspects of the E.S.L. sequence, as well as for E.S.L. faculty development.

The project director was assisted by a program coordinator, funded by Title VII, who performed administrative work related to program activities. The Haitian Creole-speaking grade advisor was responsible for initial testing and placement and continued advisement. Once students entered the mainstream, they were assigned to an advisor at their grade level. However, many continued to return to the bilingual advisor to seek advice on academic and personal matters. The grade advisor also taught a bilingual science class and a Creole native language arts class to 27 students who had volunteered for it.

Teachers serving the program students in the classroom were supervised by the A.P. of their subject area and were considered primarily members of that department, and secondarily as bilingual program teachers. All the bilingual teachers were Haitians and had educational degrees from Haitian, French, or American universities. With their academic qualifications and first-hand knowledge of the cultural background of the majority of the program's students, they were considered a tremendous asset.

Paraprofessionals spoke English, and either Haitian Creole, Chinese, or Spanish. They tutored small groups, helped individuals with assignments, assisted with testing and classroom management. They also acted as intermediaries between the school and the students' families when necessary. Most had either college degrees or previous experience in education.

INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENT

Placement in the bilingual program was determined by the student's score on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB). Students who scored below the twenty-first percentile were eligible. However, because of the large

number of LEP students at Erasmus Hall, other criteria were also considered: those with the lowest scores below the twenty-first percentile and the shortest amount of time in an English language school system were given priority. The Haitian Creole-speaking grade advisor also used placement tests to determine the student's level of oral and written French and level of math skills. He then placed students according to academic level in various E.S.L. and bilingual classes, and according to grade level in mainstream classes.

A typical student schedule consisted of two periods of E.S.L., one N.L.A. class, bilingual classes in math, science, and social studies, and at least two mainstream classes.

Project students were offered instruction in E.S.L., in French, in Spanish, in Haitian Creole, and in bilingual basic mathematics, global studies, biology, general science, and economics. They could also study typing and participate in the school's bakery program. Some students also participated in the school's horticulture and restaurant management programs.

The classes that were observed by a member of the evaluation team adhered to the policy which was established at Erasmus in 1984-85 of using Creole as the spoken language of bilingual content-area classes, with English used for all written work. In both of the biology and the mathematics classes that were observed, the teachers followed this policy. If a student did not understand, the teacher provided individual attention later in the class period while the other students were solving problems or writing. Students participated actively in the Haitian Creole bilingual classes that were observed.

Students interviewed at random had high regard for their teachers and the program coordinator. They also felt that offering native language instruction in Haitian Creole on a voluntary basis was necessary if they were to realize their full potential.

The grade advisor who was teaching the course reported positive feedback from the students. Students interviewed spoke favorably about this course, and expected that it would help them pass the Regents Competency Test in Creole.

In addition, it appeared that good lines of communication had been opened with the Haitian community. The grade advisor met with incoming Haitian students and provided information and guidance to ease the adaptation process.

In sum, the evaluation team found that the school administration supports the Haitian component of the bilingual program; that progress is being made to institutionalize these services; and that steps are being taken to provide the Haitian students with competent teachers, a caring environment, and effective leadership.

The paraprofessionals provided support services to the small number of Asian and Spanish-speaking students through pull-out tutorials.

However, the situation for the small number of Spanish-speaking and Asian students in the program is very different. The program coordinator and Spanish-language teacher said that most of these students wanted to transfer to neighboring schools because they felt ostracized by other students, lacked counseling and tutoring in their native languages, and felt that their social studies instruction in English was "too fast," while mathematics and science instruction was at too elementary a level.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

The analyses of student achievement are presented by objectives for 1985-86 as proposed to and accepted by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, U.S. Department of Education.

Student Achievement in E.S.L.

-- As a result of participating in the program, students will master an average of five course outline objectives per month of treatment.

The assessment instrument used to evaluate this objective was the Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test* (CREST). The CREST was administered at the beginning and end of each semester. A mastery score to indicate gains was computed for each student by calculating the difference between pretest and posttest. The number of months of instruction between testings was computed for each student by multiplying the number of months between testings by the student's attendance rate. The number of skills mastered per month were calculated by dividing the mean mastery by the mean number of months of instruction between testings.

Table 3 presents the test results for 202 students in the fall and 88 students in the spring who were pretested and posttested with the same level. Overall, students mastered an average of 1.6 CREST objectives per

*The Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test (CREST) was developed by the Board of Education of the City of New York to measure mastery of instructional objectives of the E.S.L. curricula, and thus was constructed to maximize content validity. The test contains four items per curricular objective, and mastery of an objective is achieved when three of these items are answered correctly. The test measures mastery of 25 objectives at Levels 1 and 2, and 15 objectives at Level 3. The Kuder-Richardson reliability estimates for pretest and posttest administrations of the three levels of the CREST are:

Level 1 -- pretest (.91)/posttest (.96)
Level 2 -- pretest (.94)/posttest (.95)
Level 3 -- pretest (.91)/posttest (.91).

month of instruction in the fall and 0.8 CREST objectives per month in the spring. As the program proposed that students would master five CREST objectives per month, the program objective was not achieved. It appears, however, that the objective was not formulated appropriately. Considering the number of objectives on the test (25) and the time between pretesting and posttesting (six months), the proposed objective is unattainable. In the extreme case of a student scoring zero on pretest and 25 on post-test, the CREST objectives mastered per month would only be 4.2 (see Recommendations).

The objective commonly used for high school students in Title VII bilingual programs is mastery of one CREST objective per month. Had the program used this criterion, the objective would have been reached in the fall, and for the year if an average of fall and spring results had been computed.

TABLE 3

Results of the Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test

Test Level	Number of Students	PRETEST Mean	PRETEST S.D.	POSTTEST Mean	POSTTEST S.D.	MASTERY Mean	MASTERY S.D.	Mean Mastery Per Month
				FALL				
1	86	10.7	6.1	15.7	6.4	5.0	4.0	1.8
2	95	12.0	6.4	16.2	5.9	4.2	3.7	1.5
3	21	6.7	3.1	9.8	3.5	3.0	2.0	1.1
TOTAL	202	10.9	6.2	15.3	6.2	4.4	3.8	1.6
				SPRING				
2	60	13.5	6.1	16.2	5.9	2.6	2.5	0.9
3	28	9.5	4.7	11.6	3.6	2.1	2.7	0.7
TOTAL	88	12.3	6.0	14.7	5.7	2.5	2.6	0.8

- Students mastered an average of 1.6 CREST objectives per month in the fall and 0.8 CREST objectives per month in the spring.

Student Achievement in Native Language Arts

-- Haitian students participating in the program will show significant gains in native langauge achievement.

Haitian program students were tested with the Science Research Associates', Le Test de Lecture, which is designed to test the development of French reading skills in second language learners. The pretest (fall) and posttest (spring) raw score means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4. Data for both tests were available for only 18 students (nine percent of the total Haitian population). Statistical significance was determined through the application of the t-test model to demonstrate whether the difference between pretest and posttest mean scores is larger than would be expected by chance variation alone.

Examination of Table 4 shows that the program objective was achieved by these students whose mean gain was 8.3 points and was statistically significant. However, the representativeness of this group could not be determined.

TABLE 4

Results of Le Test de Lecture

Number of Students	Pretest		Posttest		Gain		Proportion Making Gains
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
18	71.5	9.3	79.8	12.3	8.3*	11.3	78.0

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

- Seventy-eight percent of the students tested on Le Test de Lecture made statistically significant gains.

Attendance

-- As a result of participating in the program, students' attendance will be equal to that of mainstream students.

The attendance rate for program students was 96.5 percent, approximately 15.7 percentage points above the schoolwide attendance rate (80.8 percent). Statistical significance of the difference between program and mainstream passing rates was determined through a z-test for the significance of a proportion.* This procedure tests whether the difference between one group's rate (the program's) and a standard rate (the school's) is greater than can be expected by chance variation. The z-test results ($z=5.78$) indicated that the difference in attendance rates was statistically significant ($p<.01$). The program objective was thus met.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

Staff Development

The proposal indicated that staff workshops would be held monthly to discuss topics relevant to the improvement of the program. According to the project coordinator, a workshop on creative writing in E.S.L. was offered to all foreign language and E.S.L. teachers. During interviews, teachers mentioned the need to hold regular meetings for staff members who work with students in the program.

Aside from college courses, the staff was involved in professional development activities. For example, the project director and a teacher attended the national TESOL convention, the bilingual coordinator attended a BEMSC conference on the "Centrality of Language in Education," and the

*Bruning, J.L. and Kintz, B.L. Computational Handbook of Statistics, Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1968.

grade advisor attended a presentation on South Shore High School's bilingual program and a workshop on "Jobs for Minority Students" sponsored by the Mayor's Office.

Program staff members also registered in and successfully completed seven job-related credit-bearing courses in institutions of higher education in the metropolitan New York area.

Support Services

The pivotal character in the provision of support services was the bilingual grade advisor. His work with students involved personal and academic counseling, referrals, and family contacts. He was also instrumental in developing the language policy and designing staff development activities. Other school personnel recognized his role as advisor/counselor to Haitian students in and out of the bilingual program and appreciated his concern for and sensitivity to them. Reporting to the A.P. for guidance, he had a unique perspective on the bilingual program.

Other support services included daily tutoring by bilingual paraprofessionals, a two-day orientation to Erasmus Hall conducted at the start of the school year (expanded to English-speaking students because of its success), and career-vocational offerings in the curriculum.

Parental Involvement

The proposal stated that parents would participate in meetings at a higher rate than that of regular school parents. However, program staff were unaware that the creation of a Bilingual Advisory Committee had been proposed. No records of parental attendance were provided, and there appeared to be no planned parental component in the program.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In its third year of funding, Erasmus Hall High School Bilingual Program has fulfilled a critical need in developing the potential of LEP students, particularly Haitians, to contribute to their new society through the provision of resources, training, and information necessary to address academic needs. The program has tackled the issue of addressing both linguistic and academic needs of LEP students, despite its complexity.

Project staff continued to develop a rapport with the students. Interviews with the program coordinator, the grade advisor, and teachers revealed their commitment to the education of the LEP student population. All were enthusiastic about the students and felt that the right supportive environment could increase student achievement. They were aware of the existing limitations of their program and made conscientious efforts to incorporate suggestions for improvement from previous evaluation reports.

The program provided E.S.L. instruction, content-area instruction in Creole, and native language arts instruction in Creole and advanced Spanish.

Students failed to reach the proposed objective in E.S.L., although their CREST results compared favorably with citywide standards. And although Haitian students made statistically significant gains in native language achievement, the sample size was too small to make generalizations. The attendance of program students was significantly higher than that of mainstream students. Documentation of project activities in many areas was incomplete. Thus, it was impossible to gauge the pull-out

tutorial services for the Hispanic and Asian students. There was little evidence of parental involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Because the grade advisor serves the Haitian students in the program, plus any of the other 300 Haitian students in the school, there exists a need for an additional bilingual grade advisor. If resources permit, an additional grade advisor should be identified. This would facilitate the provision of services to students and would permit greater outreach to parents.

2. In the area of parent participation, parents are still in need of training for and adaptation to the educational system of the U.S. It is recommended that the program director actively formalize collaboration with parents.

3. To best meet the needs of the Hispanic students in the program, a Spanish-speaking grade advisor is needed. One of the Spanish teachers might be released from classroom duties on a part-time basis to serve as liaison for the Hispanic students in the program.

4. The project director should provide data for all students to ensure representativeness of findings, and change the program's objective in E.S.L. to reflect a more realistic achievement level.